



**JOAN SMITH**  
Acting Director

**County of Los Angeles**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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August 8, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Joan Smith  
Acting Director

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**EXTENSION REQUEST: JANUARY 10, 2006 MOTION BY SUPERVISOR BURKE RE:  
FEASIBILITY OF CRISIS NURSERIES AND AN AMENDMENT BY SUPERVISOR  
KNABE RE: POTENTIAL SITES**

On January 10, 2006, in response to a motion by Supervisor Burke, the Board ordered the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) along with the Community Development Commission to report back in 180 days on the feasibility of developing in Los Angeles County, a series of "Crisis Nurseries", State-licensed nurseries that operate with modified staffing levels, including volunteers, for the short-term residential care and supervision of children, ages 0 to 6, placed there due to a crisis or stressful situation such as homelessness.

In order to respond to your motion, the Department conducted extensive research regarding existing crisis nurseries, an analysis of legislative issues, site visits and a review of various literatures. Our analysis also included input from the following persons:

- Cathy Cerniglia, Supervisor of California Department of Social Services, Foster Care Funding and Rates Bureau;
- Gary Levenson-Palmer, Regional Manager of Northern California Children's Residential Program Regional Licensing Office;
- Wendy Jones, Legislative Analyst of DCFS Governmental Relations;
- Theresa Rupel, Manager of DCFS Skid Row Homeless Project; and
- Bobbette Glover, Assistant Executive Director of the Community Development Commission.

We also made several site visits to gain firsthand information, including visits to the following locations:

- Midnight Mission, Downtown Mental Health Project, Union Rescue Mission, and Skid Row in Los Angeles. The purpose of these visits was to assess the need and support for crisis nurseries with those who serve the homeless.
- Regional Crisis Nursery Collaboration in Sacramento, Sacramento Crisis Nurseries North and South, and Yolo County Crisis Nursery in Davis. The purposes of these visits were to: a) meet with the directors of the existing crisis nurseries who meet monthly for mutual support and to provide development information to other counties; and b) observe their physical plants and meet with both paid and volunteer staff.
- "Becky's Place" at Bienvenidos Children's Center in Altadena. The purpose of this visit was to observe a facility in Los Angeles County that operates a similar type of nursery program.

On July 5, 2006, the Department informed the Board that an additional site visit to the Relief Nurseries, Inc. in Eugene, Oregon was planned. The following summarizes that visit:

- On July 17, 2006, a County delegation led by Miriam Long, Children's Deputy, 2<sup>nd</sup> District; Angela Carter, Deputy Director, DCFS Bureau of Administration; other staff from DCFS and the Community Development Commission, visited the Relief Nursery, Inc. in Eugene, Oregon. The Relief Nursery, Inc. is a nationally recognized alternative, non-profit model designed to prevent child abuse by strengthening high-risk families and keeping vulnerable young children safe. This is accomplished by providing a variety of services (social, mental health, and substance abuse) under one roof through a public-private partnership with local businesses and community leaders. The Relief Nursery, Inc., one of six national demonstration projects, has been in operation for 30 years and has been successfully replicated in eight urban and rural communities in Oregon.

Through our research, we have learned that crisis nurseries differ significantly from relief nurseries. Crisis nurseries are open twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week and can shelter young children for up to thirty days. Relief nurseries are open during regular daytime business hours and do not provide overnight shelter for children. Crisis nurseries emphasize shelter and provide no other direct services (instead referring parents to outside agencies) while relief nurseries are designed to provide direct services and no shelter.

After discussion with the 2<sup>nd</sup> District on August 7, 2006, it was determined that a comprehensive examination and comparison of the two models (crisis nurseries and relief nurseries), and a legislative analysis of the Oregon Relief Nursery, Inc. model must be included in the response to Supervisor Burke's motion on the feasibility of developing crisis nurseries in Los Angeles County.

Each Supervisor  
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Unless otherwise directed, I will proceed with a new Board report submission date of Tuesday, January 2, 2007. If you have any questions, please call me or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Manager, Board Relations Section at (213) 351-5530.

JS:LP:ES:emm

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors